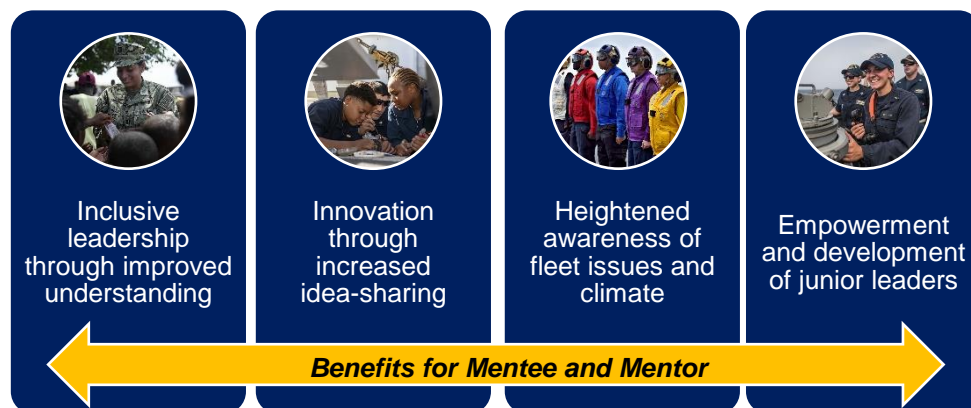# REVERSE ⇌ MENTORING

Reverse mentoring is used to build awareness of biases and barriers in the Navy by pairing senior leaders (mentees) with more junior Sailors (mentors). The mentor educates the mentee on their experience of being an underrepresented Sailor within the Navy, while the mentee provides the mentor with valuable in-group access and career advice - reinforcing the reciprocal nature of mentoring and contributing to the professional development of the mentor.

Like the other military Services, Navy is a bottom-heavy organization when it comes to age. Most Sailors belong to the younger generations of Gen Y (1980-94) and Gen Z (post-1994), while most senior leaders are pre-Gen X (pre-1965) and Gen X (1965-79).

Enlisted: 9% | 60% | 31%
Officer: 2% | 34% | 59% | 4%

■ Pre-Gen X (pre-1965) ■ Gen X (1965-79) ■ Gen Y (1980-94) ■ Gen Z (post-1994)
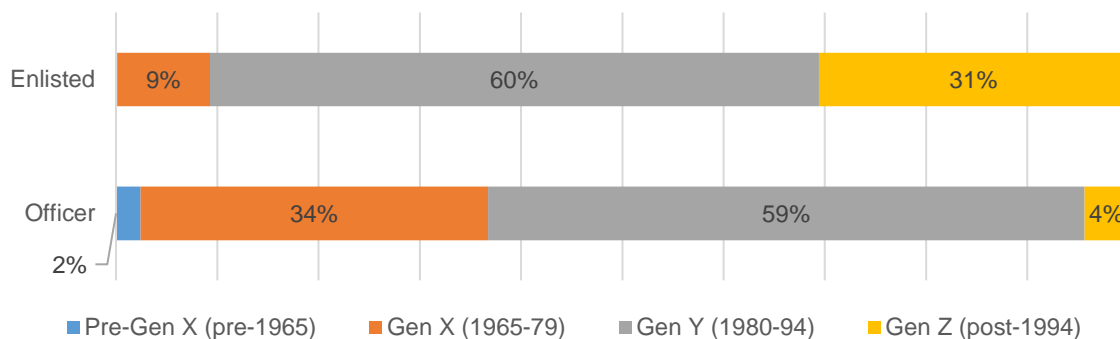
Navy's Active Duty Generation Breakdown
Data: NSIPS, 15 August 2018

These generational gaps present a challenge to leaders who seek to learn more about their younger, more junior Sailors, such as what motivates them and what they value. While mentors and mentees should not be in the same chain of command, reverse mentoring offers a solution by breaking down these generational divides and allowing the mentee and mentor to better understand different generational attitudes, values and perspectives – building a more inclusive Navy culture.

Inclusive leadership through improved understanding

Innovation through increased idea-sharing

Heightened awareness of fleet issues and climate

Empowerment and development of junior leaders

Benefits for Mentee and Mentor

HOW IT WORKS

Reverse mentoring works best with an established timeline to better manage the expectations of both the mentor and the mentee. This timeline should include a set number of private one-on-one meetings over a defined amount of time. A good place to start is three one-hour meetings over three months. Following the conclusion of the last meeting, both the mentor and mentee should reevaluate their experience and goals and may mutually agree to start another round of meetings.

Reverse Mentoring "Rules"

- Activate your Commitment: Lead with mutual respect and understanding
- Stay Open-Minded: Assume positive intent and suspend judgement
- Establish Trust: Listen with your head and heart

Responsibilities of the Mentee

- Identify and communicate your goals, expectations and what you would like to learn more about (e.g., mansplaining, microaggressions)
- Listen and ask questions during each mentoring session
- Create a safe, comfortable environment for sharing and guarantee confidentiality
- Use a conversation guide for the first meeting
- Complete all pre- and post-meeting homework
- Respect the agreed upon timeline and the mentee's time
- Intentionally attend "women" and "diversity" events to gain additional insights

Responsibilities of the Mentor

- Listen to the mentee's goals and use them to drive the conversation
- Be candid in sharing your experiences as a junior leader in the Navy
- Discuss your views of how reverse mentoring can help advance junior leaders
- Be prepared for each session, with specific topics to discuss and all supporting materials and research ready
- Provide the mentee with pre- and post-meeting homework to increase the value of the sessions and help the mentee put their new knowledge to practice
- Maintain minutes after each session to help prepare for the next meeting

Potential Discussion Topics

- Your experience in the Navy – barriers you've experienced or noticed, implicit or explicit instances of discrimination or bias
- Concerns about Navy policies and ideas for what can be improved
- Current events and trends (e.g., Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, Times Up)
- Views on work/life balance
- Why the mentor would stay in or leave the Navy
- How leaders can build trust and be more empathetic

PRE-MEETING HOMEWORK FOR SESSION #1

- **Step 1:** Review types of bias

Heidi vs. Howard: In a Columbia Business School study, different groups of students read a case study about a venture capitalist with one single difference—gender. Students respected both "Howard" and "Heidi," but Howard was described as likeable and Heidi was seen as selfish and not "the type of person you would want to hire or work for."[1]

Emily & Greg vs. Lakisha & Jamal: In 2004 there was a study conducted to see if "Black-names" would get the same number of call backs for journalist interviews as "White-names." The resumes were assigned the names Emily, Greg, Lakisha or Jamal. The resumes with the "white" names were 50% more likely to get the call back. How does this happen? Could this happen in the Navy? [2]

Blind Auditions: Another example commonly cited is blind orchestra auditions. The thought was by having a screen, the panel would be less likely to judge based on familial connections and would instead judge solely on merit. But what happened? The number of women hired increase dramatically. Using data from actual auditions, it was proven that women are up to five times more likely to move pass the first round of music auditions when a screen is used. [3]

Blindspot: A woman cuts her hand badly and she's worried the injury could cause permanent damage. The doctor assures her she'll be fine as long as he stitches her up quickly. A student happens to be walking by and recognizes the woman, "Professor, what happened?" The doctor quickly realizes she's a professor at Yale and instead of stitching, brings her to surgery and calls in the best hand doctor. Is this a problem? Have you ever seen this type of privilege in the Navy? [4]

- **Step 3:** Explore additional topics in contemporary media, like ***mansplaining, microaggressions***, and ***manterruptions.***

- **Step 4:** Try an online implicit basis test on a topic that interests you, and come to the first meeting ready to discuss your results

- **Step 5:** Consider the following questions:
    - In what ways have you seen or experienced bias? At home? At work?
    - What can you do to minimize those biases?

- **Step 6:** Hold yourself and others accountable
    - Explore your own bias and build awareness of bias
    - Create a culture of challenging bias
    - Commit to action

CONVERSATION GUIDES

Questions and discussions can and should be tailored based on mentee's goals.

Kick-Off Conversation Guide

- Do you believe men and women have different experiences across the Navy? What about Sailors of different races or ethnicities?
- Can you describe these differences from your perspective?
- What do you think are the root causes of these differences? How do you try to compensate for or fix them?
- What can my peers and I do to help…?

Conversation Guide: Work/Life Balance

- How do you set the example for work/life balance as a leader?
  - Draw boundaries, even minor ones like PT or an actual lunch break
  - Talk about how you make your balance work and why it's important
  - Promote and encourage hobbies and personal leave
  - Ask others about their hobbies (leadership by walking around)
  - Find ways to accommodate and support hobbies that align with Navy's Culture of Fitness
- How can a leader support work/life balance among his/her Sailors?
  - Eliminate single points of failure so people can take personal leave
  - Letting people take leave without making them feel guilty builds trust, encourages efficiency-building strategies and reduces burnout
  - Caregiver Leave: Ask "When," not "If," someone is taking their leave
  - Communicate to others that a Navy career is a marathon, not a sprint
  - Leader Development Framework 2.0 talks about "Sets and Reps" – but every work out plan includes rest days

Conversation Guide: Women in the Navy

- How can a male leader be a vocal ally for women?
- *Did You Know…*[5]
  - Women tend to sit on the side or along the wall in meetings, are less likely to speak and more likely to be interrupted by men *and* women
  - Women are less likely to be given credit for their own ideas
  - In an 8-member team, 3 members will make 67% of the comments
  - Male leaders are expected to be assertive, while female leaders are expected to be nurturing
  - Women who do not fit the "mold" of a female leader face push back and exclusion from their peers – men and women
  - Women tend to credit accomplishments to external factors like "timing" and "luck," but attribute failure to themselves -- men do the opposite

- A Harvard study found that men get the same amount of credit for co-authoring a paper with a coed team as when they're the sole author, while women get almost zero credit when they write a paper as a team with men
- Women receive less – and less helpful – feedback than men
- Men tend to get specific recommendations for performance improvements, while women receive generic feedback
- 66% of women receive negative feedback on their personal style, compared to less than 1% of men
- Men (and women) hesitate to give critical feedback to women from fear of receiving an emotional response
- Women are 24% less likely to receive advice from senior leaders
- Have you seen any of these situations play out in the Navy?
- Do you think female leaders in the Navy treat female subordinates differently than male subordinates? If so, do they treat them better or worse?

Conversation Guide: How to Be a More Inclusive Leader

- Change up the seating arrangement in your meetings to bring people on the periphery closer in to the main discussion
- Interject when someone is interrupted in a meeting to bring focus back to them
- Attribute ideas back to the source: "Great idea, Katie"
- Go around the room asking people directly for their input, starting with those on the phone who can often feel excluded
- Conduct a QA of your performance reviews for the Sailors you lead – how does the language differ from men to women? Across races or ethnicities?
- When you hear someone describe a woman as "bossy" or "shrill," challenge that person to provide a specific example
- Call out and celebrate the accomplishments of your subordinates and peers
- When you introduce Sailors, highlight their credentials and accomplishments. Be their biggest champion and advocate.
- If a Sailor downplays an accomplishment or brushes off a compliment, intentionally challenge their reaction: *"No, your promotion was not due to just timing, and here's why…"*
- Look for opportunities to provide constructive, actionable feedback to Sailors *in person*, *in private* and *in the moment*, when its most effective
- Treat feedback as a gift – holding back out of fear helps no one
- Solicit feedback in return – like mentoring, feedback is a two-way street

Conversation Guide: Single Sailors vs. Sailors with Families

- Have you seen or experienced any differences in how Sailors with families are treated in the Navy compared to Sailors without families?
- What assumptions do you think single Sailors make about Sailors with families? What do you think Sailors with families wish single Sailors better understood about their experience?
- Conversely, what assumptions do you think Sailors with families make about single Sailors? What do you think single Sailors wish Sailors with families better understood about their experience?
- Do you think the Navy favors family care at the expense of single Sailors?
- Do you think Navy sufficiently understands and supports the needs of Sailors with families?
- How can Navy ensure that work and duties are distributed fairly between single Sailors and Sailors with families? Should a fair distribution be *equal* or *equitable*?

REFERENCES AND LINKS

[1] Frank Flynn, Columbia Business School.

[2] "Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination," Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan, 2003.

[3] "Orchestrating Impartiality: The Impact of "Blind" Auditions on Female Musicians," Claudia Goldin and Cecilia Rouse, 2000.

[4] Banaji, Mahzarin R., and Greenwald, Anthony G. *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People*, 2013.

[5] "7 Tips for Men Who Want to Support Equality," LeanIn.org.